

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2015– 2016

Part A: General Information**Subject area and awards being examined**

Faculty / School of:	School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Subject(s):	<i>Italian</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	All Italian related modules, language and especially pre-1600
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than six weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk.

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Quality Assurance**
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards**Matters for Urgent Attention**

If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box

N/A

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

Not as far as I can recall.

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School

N/A

Standards

- 1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award**
 - *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
 - *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

Entirely appropriate learning outcomes and standards were all entirely appropriate.
- 2. Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?**
 - *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

Yes
- 3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs**
 - *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
 - *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

The range of assessed essays and exam scripts that I saw indicated that the assessment methods structured with care and diversity, that marking is done with great consistency (I never saw modules that had not been moderated thoroughly) and that classification was consistent with the standards that I would expect of an institution such as Leeds and with my own. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment based on the student performance I evaluated was entirely consistent with a leading Russell group institution: the work ranged for exceptional first class to pass but the vast majority of the work was in the higher band (first or high II.1) and several modules in my specialist area showed exceptionally strong engagement and excellent standards of overall performance.
- 4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?**
 - *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
 - *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

Yes. See comment above in 3. Intellectually the student cohort was strong across the board; the intellectual engagement was perhaps stronger than the linguistic proficiency across the entire cohort but that is normal and to be expected within Modern Language Schools at even the most elite Russell group Universities.
- 5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum**

N/A
- 6. Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year**

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

N/A. This is my first year.
- 7. Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching**

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

All the 'content' modules I reviewed were strongly informed by research inflected teaching and the curriculum design also reflected this in substantial ways. I was also impressed by the way that current research on language teaching and assessment, based on HEA standards and developed through a pilot project, had informed the elaboration of language assessment criteria. This is an especially notable example of best and informed practice in the field.
- 8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD**

N/A

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

- 9. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements**

N/A

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner.

Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.

Yes. Sufficient material was made available both before my visit to Leeds and during my stay and if I required any further information this was provided in a helpful and timely way by <<>>.

11. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?

The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.

Yes. All relevant material was sent to me in a timely and efficient way.

12. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

Yes. The questions I saw were entirely appropriate across all languages and both language and content work.

13. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

Yes. The full set of papers, both language and non-language, were made available to me. The scripts and assessed essays were accompanied by overall data on breakdown of marks, module descriptions, marking criteria: all scripts or assessed essays were

14. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

Dissertations were relatively few in number and I and the other external noted their paucity. It was explained – and I think this is to be welcomed – that dissertations will form a more substantive part of FY assessment in future: this is important because of the value of this kind of work in preparation for PGT and PGR applications and also its intrinsic qualities given the independent research dimension.

15. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

Yes, entirely satisfactory. I attended the board and decisions made were entirely satisfactory.

16. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

I was aware from the array of scripts that medical evidence and other circumstances were factored into both the marks that I saw and the exam board that I attended.

Other comments

Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form

N/A

Italian School of Modern Languages and Cultures

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Leeds, 19 ottobre 2016

Dear

Thanks for your report, and for sending it to us so quickly. Writing on behalf of all staff in Italian, I wish to thank you warmly for the positive comments you made on our work for the Single Honours and Joint Honours BA Programmes in Italian at the University of Leeds (2015-16). In particular, I am happy to read you appreciated the innovations introduced to language teaching (and especially to language assessment criteria) on the basis of the scholarship developed by colleagues at Leeds. This is an area in which we have focused much of our energies in recent years, and that we will continue to develop.

Thanks also for discussing with us the issues related to the small number of final dissertations and to the introduction of a compulsory Final Year Project, which will be effective from next academic year (2017-18).

We all look forward to meeting you again in June 2017.

Best regards,

Director of Italian (SMLC)
University of Leeds
LEEDS LS2 9JT (UK)
Email:
Tel: +44 (0)113

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	Languages Cultures and Societies
Subject(s):	<i>Italian</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	BA Italian; Joint Honours Italian
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BA

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Completed report

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Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

Matters for Urgent Attention

If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box

None

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

Yes

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School

Standards

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award

- *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

The programme aims and ILOs are entirely commensurate with the level of the award. The structure and content of the programme as a whole are excellent, and the aims and ILOs of individual modules are clear and appropriate to module levels and content.

Standards are high across the programme and are fully appropriate to the level of the degree awarded.

2. Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

Aims and ILOs are entirely in line with expectations and compare very well to those of other Italian programmes nationally. They fully meet the expectation of subject benchmarks.

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

Assessment instruments were very well designed and appropriately varied according to the content of modules and their ILOs. For language modules, assessment methods were thoughtfully calibrated to reflect progression between levels and across the range of skills assessed. For non-language modules, there was a very good mix of assessment methods between traditional essays/exams and other forms of report or commentary where appropriate.

The marking of modules was carried out rigorously and fairly, and processes of moderation were well documented. (I was not party to final degree classification processes this year.)

The general level of student performance was very impressive, indicating a very high quality of teaching and learning methods. Student work shows learning in depth and active engagement in the learning process.

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

Standards of student work were very high. The spectrum of outcomes in the work I have seen compares very favourably to outcomes and standards on comparable Italian studies programmes.

There were various pieces of outstanding work across a range of modules, including some particularly impressive performances in literature-based courses and very engaging work on cinema modules, and there was a very good range and profile of results across the board. There were, as is to be expected, some performances at the weaker end of the spectrum, but in most cases these also showed evidence of achievement of ILOs appropriate to grades awarded.

The standard of the language modules that I reviewed (levels 1 and 2 only) showed very solid acquisition of the key skills at these levels.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

N/A

6. Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

As this is my first year as external here, I am not specifically aware of enhancements made since last year.

7. Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

There is a strong presence of research-led teaching across the Italian programme. In the modules on the modern period that I reviewed, this is evident for example in modules pertaining to film, where the teaching and assessment engage dynamically with staff research which has a high profile in this area. Also in literary and linguistic modules, engagement with staff research interests is a recurrent element. Assessment methods also in various ways can be seen to encourage students to research topics independently where appropriate.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

N/A

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

N/A

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner.

Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.

I was provided with appropriate material on the university's policies on external examining (the External Examiner Handbook). I had some practical questions regarding details of what was expected of me in terms of scrutiny and review of marks, but these were easily and satisfactorily addressed when I raised them during my visit.

11. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?

The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.

Yes, I was given access to any necessary documentation about relevant programme areas, modules, marking criteria, etc.

12. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

Yes, I was provided with all draft papers, essay questions, etc. These were very well thought out and entirely appropriate to the ILOs being assessed in terms of levels and standards.
Any minor suggestions or amendments of detail that I suggested were taken on board.

13. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

The full range of assessed work for the modules I was asked to evaluate was made available to me during my visit. I was also sent dissertations in advance of my visit, which was very helpful.
Scripts were clearly marked with very good detail of annotation and feedback, and marksheets were duly annotated with evidence of the moderation process, including notes where marks had been discussed/adjusted as part of this.
I was impressed by the quality of detailed feedback given to students on assessed work.
It would have been useful to have been given access to recordings of oral examinations (especially for final year students). I raised this at the exam board and it was agreed that it would be addressed for future years.

14. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

Only two dissertations were undertaken for Italian. The subjects chosen were interesting and appropriate to the level of an undergraduate research project. The dissertations showed evidence of being well supervised and the assessment was fair and appropriate.
I was slightly surprised at the small number of dissertations undertaken, but I gather that there are moves to make a dissertation a compulsory component in future.

15. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

Administrative arrangements were entirely satisfactory and very efficiently carried out. The Board of Examiners meeting which I attended was very well organized, with excellent administrative support, and conducted in exemplary fashion. The recommendations of the board were appropriate.

16. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

There was not any detailed discussion of these procedures at the meeting I attended, but it was apparent that due consideration had been given to some cases of mitigating circumstances in preparation for the finalisation of marks and that procedures were in place. I did not have any concerns about this aspect.

Other comments

Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form

Overall, everything appears very well run: the marking of work is both rigorous and fair, and the assessment processes are very well administered and documented.

Italian School of Modern Languages and Cultures

FACULTY OF ARTS



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Leeds, 19 ottobre 2016

School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Hetherington Building
University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8QQ

Dear

Thanks for your report. Writing on behalf of all staff in Italian, I wish to thank you warmly for the positive comments you made on our work for the Single Honours and Joint Honours BA Programmes in Italian at the University of Leeds (2015-16).

In particular, I am happy to read you appreciated the investment in research-led teaching, the variety of assessment methods and their rigorousness, and the students' engagement in the learning process. We are keen to continue along this pathway, and we hope that the introduction of the compulsory Final Year Project in 2017-18 will further encourage students to interact dynamically with scholarly research.

We have taken note of your request that recordings of oral examinations will be made available to the external examiner, and we will provide them this year.

We all look forward to meeting you again in June 2017.

Best regards,

Director of Italian (SMLC)
University of Leeds
LEEDS LS2 9JT (UK)
Email:
Tel: +44 (0)113